Interview with Harold E. Horan

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR HAROLD E. HORAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Ambassador Horan entered the State Department in 1957. He served in Tehran from 1957 to 1959. He served in Intelligence and Research from 1959 to 1962. Then I have you in Florence from 1962, and I have a sort of a blank until . . .

HORAN: 1967.

Q: You were there for five years?

HORAN: Four and a half years.

Q: Then you were in Bamako from 1967 to 1969. You were with personnel of the Department from 1969 to 1970.

HORAN: Well, that's not actually correct. From 1969 to 1970, I was Liberian Sierra Leone desk officer, and then I was Deputy Director of West African Affairs.

Q: I see. And then you went to the War College?

HORAN: And then I went to the War College in 1972.

Q: Then you became African advisor at the NSC in 1973 until 1976.

HORAN: Well, actually the position was advisor for Africa and International Organization Affairs.

Q: And then you were Deputy Chief of Mission in Liberia in 1976 to 1978; Ambassador to Malawi from 1978 to '80, and then you were a Deputy Assistant Secretary of African Affairs from 1980 to '81.

HORAN: That's right.

Q: How did you become interested in foreign affairs?

HORAN: I took a trip to Europe as a student in 1949.

Q: You were going where to college?

HORAN: University of Houston. In 1949 when students from Houston, Texas, didn't travel abroad; it was very unusual.

Q: And of course, because of the war, too. Travel was not very common.

HORAN: Well, that's true, but, particularly in Houston, Texas, you just didn't go. People, at least in my class, we didn't go abroad. My family thought I was crazy. And I was so impressed with what I saw in three months in Europe and France mostly, and England, as well, the role that the United States was playing in the reconstruction of Europe, that I became very, very interested in the Foreign Service. And came back home and announced to my family that I was going to change my career goals from being a lawyer to being a diplomat, and that I would go ahead and get my degree from law school, which would make them happy, and it was a wise decision, but that I wanted to get into the Foreign Service.

Q: How did this sit with your family?

HORAN: They thought it was awful. [Laughter]

Q: Was it awful because it was just unknown, or was it awful because diplomats weren't . . .

HORAN: They just didn't understand what it was that you did in the Foreign Service. When I came home before going to my first post in Tehran, my sister said to me, “Well now, what are you going to do in Tehran?”

And I said “Well, I'm going to be a third secretary.”

She said, “Well, I didn't know you could type.” [Laughter]

Q: How did you get into the Foreign Service?

HORAN: I got a job in Washington with the Federal Trade Commission as a lawyer. And had taken the Foreign Service Exam, the three-and-a-half day exam, and failed it. I came to Washington and took the Georgetown University summer seminar for preparing people for the Foreign Service. They don't offer this seminar any longer. As I was working in the Federal Trade Commission, took the three-and-half-day exam and failed it. Then the next year I got myself a private tutor. Can't remember his name now, but he had been a former Foreign Service officer, and he was a brilliant guy but very weird, very strange. But he took me over the coals for six months. I took the exam and passed it.

Q: This was when?

HORAN: 1957. Well, the exam was 1956; the oral exam was 1957.

Q: What sort of training did you get?

HORAN: I only got the training we had in those days, the old FS-100 course. Which was, what, three months, four months?

Q: Three months, yes.

HORAN: And I had some French training for three months, brush up. And went to Tehran.

Q: I'm going to sort of move ahead, unless you think I shouldn't. I mean whether to concentrate on your African time.

HORAN: Okay.

Q: But were there any points in Tehran or Florence that particularly struck you, that more or less stuck with you later?

HORAN: The first lesson that I learned — there were two lessons that I learned — which I think is very important. The first lesson I learned was, one of my first supervisors — a Foreign Service officer — said, “You know, I've got two guys working for me now in Washington complaining about the fact that they have no-win jobs. Young officers. They don't like what they're doing.” He said, “You can always make something out of a job. When you go into a job, see what there is to do there and make something out the job. Don't sit around bemoaning the fact that you're not doing foreign policy decision making.”

The other thing I did was that I decided in my mind that I would never fight an assignment. Being assigned to Tehran at that time was a financial burden because in those days you had to go out and buy your stove and your refrigerator, and the like, and ship them to Tehran. You were not provided the sort of logistic support in those days that exists today.

And I was called in by the personnel officer who said, “Look, I know its going to be a trial for you in terms of finances for Tehran. Maybe I can send you to Naples. They need some visa officers in Naples.”

I said, “No. I decided that I'll take assignments as they're given to me and work with them that way.” So I think this was important.

Before Africa, the only other thing I think might be of some interest to researchers would be my experiences with the severe 1966 flood in Florence.

Q: Ah, yes. I would like to talk about that. Could you explain what happened and what you and the consul did there? HORAN: Well, there was a huge amount of rain that had been falling for some weeks, and a dam broke. Either the dam broke or the locks had to be released; I'm not sure which. In any case, there was a tremendous flood in Florence with a flood level of up to 12 to 15 feet in some areas. We woke up the next morning — this was in November of 1966 — and the river was coming up over the banks. The Consulate was high, it was just on the river but it was high.

Q: This is the Arno River.

HORAN: The Arno River. And the Consulate happened to be on a little rise. We never had thought about this before, but this was going to make a lot of difference in terms of what we were able to do. Well, I went out in the early morning and I walked down the river toward the old Ponte Vecchio, the covered bridge, and saw at the Excelsior and Grand Hotels that the water was quite high. And so I came back and told my boss, the consul general, that . . .

Q: Who was the consul general?

HORAN: Joe Wheeler. USIA Officer. Told him that we were in for real serious problems. Well, indeed, finally the water started pouring over the banks at the consulate level. The first concern of Joe Wheeler was our classified files, which were on the ground floor. He made us, the two officers in the building, take the safe and manhandle them up to his apartment, which was on the second floor. So my friend, Rush Taylor, who is now ambassador in Togo, and I wrestled these files upstairs, cursing Joe Wheeler for what we

thought was lack of wisdom. Well, of course he was doing the right thing. In a nutshell, we lost our basement. Our basement was totally flooded.

We woke up the next morning with the flood having receded and there was a disaster in the streets. Downtown Florence was a disaster area. There was no electricity, there was no water, there had been some deaths, shops were flooded out. The jewelry shops on the old covered bridge were just flooded out and the jewelry was somewhere downstream in the Arno. The one thing that saved us is that because we were higher than most places, our cars were not flooded. Many, many cars were flooded and lost but the consulate had its own vehicles. And the first thing we did was start evacuating American tourists. We took our cars to the hotels which were right there on the Arno, where the lobbies were full of mud and there was no way to get around, and we took as many tourists as we could and who wanted to leave to the train station to get them out of Florence.

Subsequent to that, we turned our attention to restoring the consulate. As I say, we were without water, without lights. Happily, we were given support from Camp Darby, which is a NATO base, an American base nearby. They brought us water and other supplies.

Then we turned our attention to helping restore the city. Through the American community, the church, we set up a committee to raise funds and to administer those funds. I was on that committee. We would take applications from people for little loans of no more than $50 to $100, to help them just to buy supplies to get themselves back on their feet. And this went on for about a month or six weeks; culminated by the visit of Hubert Humphrey, as vice president. He had been on a tour of Western Europe and he decided he wanted to visit Florence, obviously to see what was going on because there was obviously a lot of attention in the United States press about this. Ted Kennedy also showed up to take the tour of this disaster area. By the time Humphrey got there, we were pretty much back on an even keel, but he wanted to see what was going on.

Q: Looking at this, how would you have done it differently? One always learns from a disaster.

HORAN: Yes. I don't think I would have done it differently, I really don't. We were just very lucky. What I might have done differently is to have quickly moved as many automobiles as we could get our hands on to higher ground. But it just so happened that we were lucky enough to have enough to do the job of getting people out.

Q: Did the embassy in Rome give much support?

HORAN: Oh, yes. They sent somebody down. As a matter of fact, they sent an extra officer down to help us with that period — or up I should say — to help us with that period.

Q: I'd like to turn now to how you got into the field of African Affairs, where you spent most of your time.

HORAN: Well, you know, in those days — I don't know whether it's true or not now — but they use to have this wish list when you were a young Foreign Service officer and you put down the three posts that you wanted. Right? This was when I was a junior Foreign Service officer. So I put down Paris; any other West European post, my second choice; my third choice, which I had forgotten by the time I got assigned to Bamako, a French-speaking, West African post. So I guess after four and a half years in Florence, they figured that I was due for a post and an assignment such as Bamako, Mali. I was appalled. I didn't know where Bamako, Mali was. [Laughter]

Q: [Laughter] Join the club of all of us when we go searching for where the hell is this.

HORAN: That's right. Exactly. But it just couldn't have been better for my career.

Q: What were you doing? I mean, in the first place, to put it in a time frame, you went there in 1967.

HORAN: I went there in 1967. That's correct. I was the political officer. We only had an economic officer, a political officer, DCM, an ambassador, and the administrative officer.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

HORAN: The ambassador was Bob Moore.

Q: Now, what was the situation in Bamako in 1967?

HORAN: Very, very bleak. We had very little contact with the government. They were very anti-American, anti-West. Lots of rhetoric, pro-eastern, pro-communist rhetoric. They were in support of the North Vietnamese in the Vietnamese War. The ambassador had very few contacts. He had been told to just go there and hold the thing together. And so it was a very frustrating time for me because I had been a consular officer in Florence, an administrative officer in Tehran. So this was my first political officer experience. Frustrating for me trying to do my job, get information, and get people to talk to me. I must say that Bob Moore was an understanding person, a wise man. He is a wise man and a gentleman. He sort of nurtured me through this period.

Q: Who was the leader of Mali and why was there this anti-Western . . .

HORAN: Modibo Keita and he was one of these leaders who took a Marxist-Leninist road, a heavily organized society. The government, of course, organized everything, and the party — there was a one-party state of course which ran everything, including the agriculture production. They looked toward China and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union built them a stadium, the Chinese built them a leather factory. This was, of course, when we were still in the Cold War. We didn't have relations with China. From the American standpoint the situation in Mali was unhealthy.

In 1968 when both the ambassador and DCM had changed, the ambassador from Bob Moore to Ed Clark, the situation had gotten so bad in Mali, the government and the party

had become so domineering, that there was a coup d'#tat. I woke up one morning — my house was on a little dirt road leading into the one main paved road into town, in which I had to go past the party headquarters to the embassy — I walked out my house about 6:00 in the morning and my gardener was standing there, and he said to me, “Patron, there are lots of soldiers in the streets with guns.”

I went the radio and turned the radio on, and martial music was playing. I said to my wife, who was working at that time at the USIA library, “Let's go to the office early.” I drive down the dusty road and find myself there at the party headquarters, and there are the soldiers and the tanks. Then I go down the road, which was called Minister's Road, because a lot of the ministers had their houses not too far from the party headquarters, and I could see people standing outside arguing with the soldiers, and with tanks standing around. So I made a beeline for the ambassador's residence. He used to love to tell this story. He was on his porch having his breakfast — this must have been 7:00, I guess. I said, “Mr. Ambassador, I think we've had a coup d'#tat.” [Laughter]

He said, “Well, you go report it.”

So I went to the embassy and reported developments. I think we were the first to report it. Then I had a good friend of mine who was the Agina Frana press reporter, who lived down the street from me — nice guy. I haven't seen or heard from him in years. In any case, I went to his house, and I said,” Do you realize there's been a coup d'#tat?”

He said, “What are you talking about?”

The first thing he did was to go to his telex machine, and turned it on and it was off. That was the first thing, as a reporter, he thought about, was to go look at his telex, because that's how he communicated with his office in Paris. He was still in his pajamas, and, in any case, he turned on his telex and it was off, and so he recognized that indeed we had a coup d'#tat. This was a coup d'#tat by the military, and, of course, the leader of the coup d'#tat, Moussa Traore, is still president. And, I guess, he's — I'm out of it of course, but

from what I gather — doing quite well. He was head of OAU and called on the President, I think, four years ago. So that, of course, changed things.

The interesting thing for me, of course, was that I was the old boy on the block, because I had a new ambassador and a new DCM. As a matter of fact, I discovered that some of the military leaders had gone to the United States for training.

Q: I'm looking a little at the mechanism. Here you are, the political officer, there's a coup, which is sort of the mother's milk of political officers, a great thing. What did you do? I mean, you can see tanks and you saw things happening, but then what did you do?

HORAN: Well, in a case like that, you listen to the radio. The first thing you do is listen to the radio, and then you report it back to Washington. Then you do as you do in every coup, you lie low for a while, and the ambassador talks to everybody he can talk to, you talk to whoever you can talk to. I did a lot of walking around the streets, because, as in most coup d'#tats of this kind, the crowds were joyous and there was great celebrations, people rode around on their bicycles or walked around the city carrying — for some reason they broke branches off the trees and laced their bicycles with branches off the trees. I visited some of the rallies with President Traore and the other leaders. Then little by little we tried to get to know some of these people.

One interesting sideline on this, what we had in store for us, in the very early days of the coup, the military had a road blockade at one point. An AID official was stopped and explained he wanted to pickup his child, who was at school — this may have been the first day after the coup. There was an officer manning the barricade and he explained to the officer in French what he needed to do. He needed to get through the barricade to get his child at school, and the officer's response in English was, “No sweat.”

So I had seen from the files that we had some officers who had been in the United States, and this was confirmation with this totally colloquial English, “No sweat.”

Q: Here we had a rather extremely pro-Marxist, anti-Western leader — this is before the coup — allowing some of his military officers to go to the West to be trained.

HORAN: Well, this had been earlier on. These officers had gone earlier on. There was no military program at the time I was there. This had been earlier when relations were better. Relations got bad over the Vietnam War, I think.

Interestingly enough, the coup was not a coup which changed from East to West overnight. They were non-aligned, enthusiastically so.

As a matter of fact, they announced on the radio — of course, you have to listen to the radio in small West African countries, that's where you get your news, that's the device the government uses to convey news — that they were going to have an agricultural fair up in the Sahara Desert in a place called Kidal, which was an old French prison in the middle of nowhere. If you were in that prison and escaped, you'd be dead because there's no where you could go. They announced that the President was going to lead this delegation to the fair. It was a three-country fair, Mali — I want to say Mali, Morocco and Mauritania. So I called a friend of mine in the foreign office and I said, “I wonder if I could get permission to go to this fair.” I had, of course, cleared this with my ambassador.

So he said, “Well, I'll just have to see.”

So, as was my habit, I was sitting on my porch at lunch time one day, listening to the noon news, and the noon news said, “The following delegation headed by President Traore shall appear tomorrow at the airport to go to Kidal for the fair.” They listed off the names, and there was my name.

What's interesting is that none of my other diplomatic colleagues thought to request this except one, an officer from the East German embassy, and they had allowed both of us to go. Of course, we didn't have relations with East Germany. In those times things were

pretty bad. But because we were both diplomats, they put us together in the same hotel room. [Laughter]

One point of the story is that during the fair, they had the dances and singing in the evening, including a pro-North Vietnamese, anti-American skit. And there I was sitting as a diplomat. So this young fellow — not so young, but — whom I knew was a personal aide to the President, came over to me after the performance and apologized. Of course, he'd done it on instruction from the President. But here is this American, we don't want him to get the wrong idea, we didn't know this was going to happen. I mean, the people thought this was what was wanted, because that's what they would have done if Keita had been there. They apologized to me to make sure that I, and the American government, understood that this was not something they had done on purpose.

Q: Also, it points out that it's easy to go with a chip on your shoulder and maybe leave in a huff, when often it's best just to sit there and keep rather stony-faced, and let it go.

HORAN: Plus the fact in Kidal, there wasn't any place I could go. I guess I could go back to my hotel room and sulk. [Laughter] No. You're absolutely right. I'd made up my mind that here I was in the middle of nowhere, where very few American diplomats if any had previously visited. In Keita's days it was restricted because it was used by the Malians just as it has been used by the French, which was for political prisoners. They didn't want foreigners there. I was able to take pictures of the prison, which, once again, was unheard of under Keita. I decided to just sit it out.

Q: Did you find that you were able to — maybe influence is the wrong term, but at least gain more respectability?

HORAN: Absolutely. Well, one thing I forgot to mention was the fact that we had a young cultural affairs officer there. The President's wife, in a different era, had worked at the USIA library, and he had known her there. So we had that entre. We found that you just worked the thing very slowly, calmly, not push. We didn't have to push, our interests were

not that great in Mali. We could be very calm and make our contacts as we could, and slowly our aid program increased, and our dialogue with the Malians increased. But they were never really — they may be now, but at that time they were neutral. They were not pro-West, not pro-East. They had projects from the Soviets and the Chinese they were prepared to retain, and as is rightly so. As a matter of fact, a large part of the diplomatic representation that this new group found in place in Mali was East European and Chinese, and North Vietnamese.

Q: How about the French? Did the French have much of a role there or had they left in a huff?

HORAN: No they had not left in a huff. Keita had become a member of the Francophone state. De Gaulle had invited everybody and everybody stayed on as Francophone states except for Guinea, you know. No, the French remained a presence there, and they had their own projects. That tie was not, obviously, as close as the ties with Ivory Coast, or Senegal, but they stayed there.

Q: Had Africa trapped you by that point? Were you ready to sort of sign up as an Africanist?

HORAN: I guess the answer is yes, because I went back to be the personnel officer for Africa, but that didn't pan out. And I took a job as desk officer for Liberia. I was pretty well caught up in the continent.

Q: Could you describe what you did as desk officer for Liberia? You were there from 1969 . . .

HORAN: I was only desk officer from 1969 to 1970, when I was named Deputy Director of the Office of West African Affairs. What do you do as a desk officer? Well, of course, among the handful of West African states, Liberia, along with Nigeria, was perhaps the

most active desk. I had Liberia and Sierra Leone, and I've backed up for Ghana and, I think, Togo.

As you know, we have a special, unique relationship with Liberia. So the main task of the desk officer, and this is true of almost any desk officer, was to be sure that the ambassador's concerns about the levels of economic assistance and attention to Liberia were maintained, because the Liberians were forever complaining, as many countries do, about the level of assistance. In the United States, Liberia wasn't all that popular with Tubman as President. Of course, he'd been president for 25 years. But we did have, and still have, very special U.S. resources in that country. Unique resources, like an area telecommunications office, like port facility rights and landing rights at the airfield, which we built during World War II, a navy navigational system — part of a navy navigational system — in Liberia. Plus the fact that Liberia has always been a traditional friend of ours both in African issues and in international organization issues. So we had real interests to protect there.

Q: Rubber was still important during that time?

HORAN: Rubber was still important and so was iron ore. In those days, it was maybe the major country in Africa, with the exception of South Africa, in terms of U.S. investment. That probably has changed by now, but that was certainly true when I was there. Firestone had its largest rubber plantation in the world in Liberia. Plus the fact that we created the nation, so there was this tremendous cross-society cultural tie. I mean, many Liberians were married to Americans, had American relatives, many were educated and are educated in the United States, so there was these series of ties which were very important.

Q: And this was also a period when the black movement in the United States was really becoming important. Did this play much of a role? As a desk officer, did you find . . .

HORAN: I didn't get a sense of that as desk officer. As I say, I was only there for a year. I got a sense of that when I went to Liberia later on as Deputy Chief of Mission, certainly. By this time you had a surge of visits by Black Americans who came to Africa to take a look.

Q: We'll come to that a little later. Then you say you were in charge of West African Affairs.

HORAN: Deputy Director.

Q: Who was the Director?

HORAN: Well, that's interesting. The Director was Rudy Aggrey. Rudy was a USIA officer, but he was black. David Newsom was the new Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, and he had a sense of wanting to beef up the black presence in the bureau and overseas. One of the persons that he named was Rudy. Well, Rudy, to my good fortune, said that as his deputy he wanted a non-black who could speak French. Well, there I was.

I'll never forget the time I was — Bob Smith told me this, he was my predecessor and he called me in and said Rudy wants you to be his deputy. So my first reaction was, “By God, I get a parking permit in the basement.” So I told my wife when she picked me up at the office, “Guess what? I've got a parking permit in the basement.” [Laughter]

Q: This is one of the not mentioned perks of moving up. You don't get real money in moving, but . . .

HORAN: I don't think deputy directors get parking permits any more.

Q: What were your responsibilities?

HORAN: The way Rudy ran his office was very much like many ambassadors run their offices overseas. The DCM runs day-to-day operations. He follows the office director's instruction and he's got to satisfy the office director that things are being handled well,

but he's the one who generally works with the officers, works out the problems with the officers.

Rudy is — I say Rudy is, because he's a very close friend of mine — a stickler for detail, and so I had to satisfy Rudy in this regard. He's a master draftsman himself, and he's a master planner, and also a great worrier. I'm sure he won't mind me saying that. I think his objective was just to make sure that we, as a government, particularly as a government, gave the increased attention to Africa that he felt it was entitled to; to take them seriously.

Q: Were talking about the period of about 1970 to '72.

HORAN: '70 to '72. Yes.

Q: Could you talk about David Newsom, who's now your boss?

HORAN: Right. Yes, he's my boss again. (Director, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University.)

Q: Given that for the researcher to throw into the equation. Looking at him there, how did he operate and what were his interests?

HORAN: That's interesting, because he got there and he gathered the whole staff together after he'd been there a couple of weeks, and he said, “There are three intractable problems in this bureau. Now, I don't know why we can't solve these problems, whether it's because they're insolvable, or because we're not using the right rationale, or we're not being diligent enough. I'm not sure what it is. But here are the three problems that we have got to resolve.” Well, two of them were in the Office of West African Affairs. [Laughter] So Rudy and I were feeling pretty grim at this point.

One was a very strange little crisis, the details which I've forgotten, which had to do with our relations with Guinea and the fact that we had established an “Air Guinea.” The Guineans were not paying for this — I think there were two aircraft. We had established

this Air Guinea by the U.S. Government as a loan to the Guineans — this is under Kennedy — in order to influence the Guineans not to allow the Soviets to use the airport in Conakry for their military aircraft to survey the mid-Atlantic.

The other one was that we had built a very expensive hospital, called the JFK Hospital, in Liberia. The John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital, on the ocean, I guess it must have been nine of ten stories high, state of the art equipment, and not opened. It was there just like a monument to inefficiency.

Q: Well, I suppose even more than doctors is having an efficient administrative staff.

HORAN: Well, it was the fact that we were going to give it to the Liberians, they were suppose to open it, and the Liberians weren't opening it. Secretary Rogers had made a trip to Liberia, among other places, and he said, “For God's sake, get that hospital opened. It looks like a monument to American inefficiency.”

So those were the two. The other was a problem in Algeria, which I won't worry you with because I don't know the details. So that was our agenda from David Newsom.

It so happened that I was fortunate enough to go with David Newsom as his briefcase carrier on his first trip to West Africa as Assistant Secretary of State. We started in Senegal and went to Bamako. He loves the desert and we went to Timbuktu, then we went to Niger, then to Togo and Ghana, and I think Nigeria and back to Ivory Coast. It was really a marvelous trip. His background had been African partly, and he was very interested in African affairs and he really wanted to make an impact on Africa. I think he did.

Q: Looking at your parish, being West Africa, what was American interests there? This was '70-'72, the Nixon period.

HORAN: Yes. You know, we were still in the process, I think, as a government, of trying to articulate just exactly what our interests were in Africa. We're talking now about a process

which started in the very late '50s with the independence of Ghana. We had very little presence in Africa, very little expertise in Africa. We didn't know what we wanted to do in Africa, and even in '67 — I think this is part of David Newsom's contribution to U.S.-African relations — we were still asking ourselves, “Well, what is it we want to do in Africa?”

As far as West Africa is concerned, well, except for the day-to-day relations with each country we — by this time, by the way, we tried to get away with not having embassies in every country in Africa. That didn't work. The Africans would not stand still for it. They wanted to have an American presence in each country. Well, there were still a few exceptions, particularly in Southern Africa, but in West Africa at that time we pretty much had embassies in place in all these countries.

Having the presence of an ambassador makes you have to do things, obviously. The ambassador is going to get out there and he's not just going to sit in his office. And we were building up aid programs. We felt that we had this requirement, of course, to be involved in economic assistance programs with Africa, and still struggling with just exactly what form that should take.

The African bureau itself was struggling with getting a piece of the pie that it thought it needed, and it had formidable opponents in the State Department. It was not seen, obviously, as the prime — on the contrary — bureau in the State Department, because Africa was not top on everybody's lists.

There were those pockets where you could show real substantial U.S. interests and that would include Liberia, for example. And there was some trade in parts of Africa. We were also trying in those days to encourage the development, as we still do, of democratic institutions.

Q: What were the tools we had to deal with which you could see that you could have some control over?

HORAN: Well, I suppose the tools we had to deal with were personnel abroad who were there reporting on, having contacts with various countries and individuals in the countries. We had our aid programs, which fluctuated, of course, both in terms of dollar amounts and in terms of types of economic assistance programs, building on a legacy which was left from Mennen Williams, who did a lot of the spade work.

Then we had the Peace Corps presence, and we had small but growing interest on the part of American business in Africa. I think until we were able to draw on this increasing interest on the part of Black Americans in Africa.

There was a growing interest on the part of the Congress, because the Congress also was growing in numbers of black representatives. So you could draw on that as well.

Q: Were you ever able to establish ties with black congressmen or congressmen who had large black districts to help further your program?

HORAN: That would not have been at my level. I'm sure that David Newsom did this. How well we do this with Congress, I'm not sure. We're not spectacular in the terms of how well we work with Congress. [Laughter]

Q: What about personnel. Were we beginning to benefit from the fact that the Vietnam War was winding down, and getting some of the more adventurous types to . . .

HORAN: No, only in AID. We got some officers from AID who were sent to Africa, but our embassies were so small I don't think that had any impact on our building up of a cadre of “Africanists.”

Q: Were there any particular crises that you had to deal with other than — first of all, did you ever get the hospital and airline problems solved?

HORAN: Yes, we did. Rudy and I chose two bright officers; one for Guinea and one for Liberia. Both of them had to live with these problems, and find ways to solve the problems.

Q: How were they solved?

HORAN: I must say, I've forgotten the details. Obviously, we opened the hospital. We must have given some additional support to the Liberians so they could open the hospital. The hospital was opened, although I would suspect that if you looked at it today, it would be in pretty bad shape. In Guinea, we were able to work a deal whereby we were able to forgive the loan for the Air Guinea aircraft.

One of the crises we had, first of all, Tubman died. But there was smooth transition to . . .

Q: He was the President of Liberia for many years.

HORAN: Many years — 25 years. Tolbert was his Vice President and it was a smooth transition so that really didn't bother us too much.

In Guinea, the Portuguese raided Guinea during this time. There was a small Portuguese raid on Guinea. They were opposed to Sekou Toure. They were going to try to, I guess, overthrow him. Well, it didn't work. Our relations with Guinea were politically not very good, but economically okay. But the interesting thing about this story is, and it's so illustrative of what an ambassador can do, the U. S. ambassador to Burma sent a cable in saying, “We need a letter from the President to Sekou Toure saying, 'We accept and support the integrity'” — not talking about the Portuguese, because we weren't even sure it was Portuguese — “'we support the integrity, and national independence and sovereignty of Guinea.'”

I was the acting director at this point — Rudy must have been off somewhere — Bob Moore was upstairs as the Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary, so I said, “There's no way that the White House will ever give a letter from Nixon to Toure.” Well, we sent the request

over to the White House and, lo and behold, we got a letter from Nixon to Toure along those lines. A very simple letter, just said what it said. It was the only letter Toure got. He never forgot it.

As I say, our political relations were never always that great, because he saw himself a Marxist-Leninist, but we had important economic ties. It (the letter) gave us an access to this man which he never forgot.

Q: Who was the ambassador, do you recall?

HORAN: I don't remember his name. I've forgotten.

Q: Well, we can fill that in later.

HORAN: Whoever it was, it was the kind of thing ambassadors ought to do.

Q: Sometimes they dismiss it out of hand, but there are times that you want to show that we really hold to our principles.

HORAN: Exactly. Well, he never forgot it. Toure never forgot that gesture from Nixon.

Q: While you were the desk officer and Deputy Assistant Secretary dealing with African affairs, what were the interests — and I'll say this, maybe it's loaded — if any, of the White House, especially Henry Kissinger as National Security Advisor?

HORAN: Well, actually I can address that more clearly from my NSC days.

Q: Shall we move to that?

HORAN: If you want to, sure.

Q: Why don't we.

HORAN: Sure, because that comes on after a year in the National War College.

Q: We're talking now about 1973.

HORAN: Yes, 1973. I did not want to go overseas, and I just asked the personnel to get me a job. It just so happened that the NSC was asking for files for the African/International Organizations man and, to make a long story short, I got the job.

Kissinger told me in our interview that he had not been able to spend as much time as he would have liked to on Africa, and for me to keep this in mind, and find ways for him to become involved.

Nixon, when he was out of office between being Vice President and President, had traveled to Africa. He never forgot the hospitality that he received from certain African leaders. So he saw a fair number of African heads of state.

But when I got to the NSC it was quite clear that Africa was just low man on priority. There were just so many other issues involved — relations with China, the Cold War, disarmament verification programs, and this sort of thing.

We use to have a system whereby if the President were going to be making a speech on foreign affairs, NSC staffers had an opportunity to comment on the speech. We had about 15 minutes. A copy would be hand delivered to our desks and we were told: “Okay. Comment on this speech in about 15 minutes.”

Well, another part of the world which was low on the totem pole was Latin America. My “Latin American” colleague and I would get together and quickly — because they would never talk about Latin America and Africa in these speeches — and we would quickly draft a simple little statement about the fact that the President recognized the importance of maintaining good relations with Africa, Latin America, blah, blah. And we would put something in to draft. Then we would wait until the speech was made and we'd find out

that our edit hadn't survived. We did this for Nixon and Ford. We finally, in one of the speeches that Ford made — I think it may have been one of his speeches on the state of the Nation, I'm not sure. I guess he only had one, didn't he? In any case, he finally said something about Africa and Latin America. [Laughter] We figured we had finally accomplished something in terms of attention.

Q: But it does show a sense of priority, and a sense of interest as far as the administrative apparatus. It's only when there is a great crisis in which we want to invest our time.

HORAN: I think that's true. One of the things that happened when I was in the NSC was Nigeria became the second largest supplier of high-grade crude oil to the United States. Well, this is the kind of interest that people in the White House can understand. So that would get attention if I needed to get the attention of superiors in terms of Nigeria.

Basically, though, until a couple of years later, my duty was to stand watch in a sense. I was happily not one of those who had any bones to pick with the State Department. There had been a period of, I think, confrontation between the State Department and the NSC, but I didn't have that problem. I mean, I came from the African bureau and I knew the people, and I had no problems working with them.

Our problem came when the Portuguese withdrew from Angola and we had these three interior parties who started fighting each other for control of the country. The Soviets started coming in in a big way.

Q: Was this during your time in NSC?

HORAN: Yes. They started coming in in a big way in '75 and '76 with Soviet military arms and Cuban troops. And, as you know, the U.S. Government mounted a small program to counter the Soviet activities in Angola. That's when, I think, Kissinger really realized that he'd better go out there and take a look. In April of '76 he finally went to Africa.

Q: Had he ever been there before?

HORAN: Not as Secretary of State. I don't think he'd ever been there before.

Q: How about as NSC? Did he travel?

HORAN: Not in Africa, no. I think this was his first trip to Africa. I was on the delegation. It was an extensive trip, which went from Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, on to the west coast through Zaire, Ivory Coast, and Senegal. I'm sorry, Liberia, not Ivory Coast. Liberia and Senegal.

Frankly, I think in the post-Angola situation, where the Soviet-backed interior forces had gotten control of the capitol and claimed themselves as government, and was recognized as such, Kissinger decided he'd better go out and take a look at the issues, particularly in Southern Africa, so that he would know what was going on, and so that we not get ourselves in a situation where some kind of a vacuum would be created in which the Soviets could move.

When I came back from that trip in April, I left the NSC. That's when he started his mini-Southern Africa shuttle in which he took on the question of the independence of Zimbabwe. Now, he didn't succeed in what he set out to do, which was to get the white Rhodesians to agree to some form of majority government. But he certainly laid the ground work for what came after the Ford Administration.

Q: While you were in the NSC, you said you had no particular bones to pick. But did you sense a feeling of the NSC versus the State Department. Did you find yourself getting involved in that?

HORAN: No, not really.

Q: Was there any feeling about Kissinger versus Rogers? I mean, as much time . . .

HORAN: Well, not in terms of African affairs. If there was, and I'm sure there was in other areas, I'd have to . . .

Q: Were you rather isolated in dealing with African affairs? Were you involved in other matters with the NSC?

HORAN: No, because the way the NSC operated in those days was that the senior advisor — of course, I was the senior advisor, but I was the only advisor for Africa and International Organizations Affair. It is just assumed by your superior, who was the deputy to Kissinger — who was Brent Scowcroft and who is now the NSC advisor — you were just assumed to do your job. If you needed to get his attention, it was up to you to get his attention. You have your staff meetings where people talk about what they do and what they should do, but insofar as interaction between all the staff in those days of brainstorming an issue, well, you just didn't do that. I didn't brainstorm Soviet issues, and the Soviet guys didn't brainstorm African issues, unless, of course, they crossed wires. But you were expected to do your job.

Q: On the Angola issue, that became quite a crisis of conscience to some people in the State Department at the time. Did we go covert action or not?

HORAN: Yes, we did. The debate there was, “Let's don't do covert, let's try diplomatic means.” I'll leave it to others who were involved to talk about that and their own personal views. But Kissinger was quite clear, I think, in his own mind — I can't speak for him, but my sense was — he felt that we needed to do more, that there wasn't very much we could do diplomatically. The Portuguese had withdrawn, where could we turn.

Once again, I can't speak for Henry Kissinger, he can speak for himself very well, but, I think he had a sense that in the post-Vietnam period he was frustrated about the fact that we may as a country look weak and the Soviets look strong. He couldn't really let the Soviets get away with moving into Angola where neither of our interests really were very

great. Our economic interests were greater than the Soviets because we were buying all their oil. I think he just felt that you couldn't let the Soviets get away with this sort of thing and you had to try something to make it difficult for them to do so.

Now there are people who write on this who say it was a failed policy because it was a policy that didn't go far enough. But the problem was, you know, the country was not in an aggressive mood. We were still licking our wounds. Of course, the Clark Amendment came along and said, “We will not appropriate any covert funds for Angola.” And that was that. And that took care of that. You were faced with this law, there was nothing Kissinger could do. He wasn't going to violate the law.

Q: How did we feel about the Soviet “menace” in Africa at that time?

HORAN: Well, we were never sure what the Soviets were really up to. They had little pockets of influence here and there, but did they have a grand plan or didn't they? This was the debate that went on. It still goes on. Did the Soviets have a plan for Africa, or did they just look for pockets of opportunity in which they moved? Except perhaps in the early days when they moved in with some forms of economic assistance, because they pretty quickly diminished their economic assistance as they don't have any to give, but, except for the early days when they did sort of move in and look at the countries that looked like they were maybe pro-Eastern and influence them, I personally don't see any evidence of any grand plan. I see lots of evidence of pockets of opportunity. And the record for the Soviets has not been very good, because you can go down the map in Africa and look at the countries that initially looked as if they were going to be socialist states, even Marxist/Leninist states, and they've now turned. I mean, Guinea is pro-West, Mozambique is turned back to the West after turning to the East . . .

Q: Ethiopia.

HORAN: Ethiopia. Even now Ethiopia is not going anywhere.

Q: We're talking about 1989.

HORAN: Yes. Even the Congo is now probably non-aligned, but certainly we have good relations with the Congo. Mali is another case where now we have a fairly Western head of state, who's been in there now since 1968.

Q: We might now move from the NSC. In 1976 you were appointed as DCM in Monrovia. How did that appointment come about?

HORAN: Well, Beverly Carter had been brought in by David Newsom. He was a black USIA officer. Had been brought in by David Newsom as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. In those days, I was downstairs as a Deputy Officer Director and I got to know him through that process. When he was named Ambassador to Liberia he called and asked me if I'd be his DCM. By that time, I thought that I was ready for a change from the NSC, and so I said yes. It was that simple. Those were the days — I don't know if it's still true or not — when ambassadors could still choose their DCMs. So it was that simple. In the summer of '76 I went out to Monrovia.

Q: What was the situation in Liberia at that time? You had a new president . . .

HORAN: We had a new president . . .

Q: Tolbert.

HORAN: Tolbert was the president. By the time I got there, relations couldn't have been better, because President Ford in 1976 had a series of state visits to celebrate our bicentennial of our Declaration of Independence. And when I was in the NSC, as a matter of fact, I had been able to convince my superiors that we had to have at least one African head of state represented in the group of heads of state who were coming over during that year to be received by the President. There was one natural candidate for this, and that was President Tolbert.

So President Tolbert had been invited to come to the United States for a state visit in the context of the bicentennial celebration. Of course, he was very pleased. So when I got to Monrovia in the summer things couldn't have been better. I got there, I think, in June. We had our July 4th celebration and Tolbert came. Well, presidents don't normally show up, at least in Africa, at July Fourth celebrations, but he came out of the enthusiasm he had for the fact that within a few weeks he was going to leave for a state visit to the United States. So our relations were quite good.

Q: You described what our interests were. I assume they hadn't changed — economic, military, and then the normal ties . . .

HORAN: Trade, investment . . .

Q: . . . plus the fact that you talking about the increasing influence of blacks with this. This is also about the time, wasn't it, that television series "Roots" came out, which also spurred the interest of blacks in their roots in Africa, which meant more trips to Africa.

HORAN: Plus the fact that Liberia was a stead-fast friend in terms of supporting us on problems of international organizations.

Q: How was Liberia seen by the other African states? Was it considered sort of a running dog of America heroism?

HORAN: It was not taken terribly seriously, I don't think, by the rest of Africa. In Africa, you know, it's a club. It's a club of heads of states who all belong to the Organization of African Unity, and they tend not to criticize each other. There are exceptions, of course, but they tend not to criticize each other or to mettle in each other's affairs. As I say, there are obviously exceptions.

I think that probably Tolbert could feel pretty good about himself if he found himself in a room full of African heads of state. He would be paid due respect. It was recognized that

obviously he was a good friend of the United States. You can look and see what they got in terms of economic assistance. They used to get the highest per capita. They hate for us to say this, but they used to get the highest per capita aid of any country in Africa. That really didn't impact, I don't think, greatly on where Liberia stood in Africa. It's a boys' club. It's an exclusive club of heads of state.

Q: How did you ambassador, Beverly Carter, use you as a DCM?

HORAN: As a manager. It was, in those days, probably the largest mission in terms of the numbers of personnel and the numbers of agencies represented. So the DCM really had a managerial job to do, and Carter wanted it like that, and rightly so, I think. Carter wanted to leave himself free to negotiate with the government, to know very well the players, know the President, and he was a master at that.

Q: Tell me, with the Liberian government it became apparent later, but it was known, that there was this real class difference between those that were in the city and were descendants of American slaves, I guess they were called the Americans or something like that.

HORAN: Americo-Liberians they were called. We didn't call them that, but that's what they were called.

Q: And then those who came really from the villages beyond and who weren't getting as much of a slice of the pie. Did you have much contact with the other group?

HORAN: It's really not black and white, it's not correct to say, “The other side,” because when Tubman became president he married an “up-country girl.” She was magnificent. Mrs. Tubman was what they call an “up-country girl.” She was a native Liberian, not an Americo-Liberian. He opened up doors for people.

It's quite true that the Americo-Liberians in the city of Monrovia held the major reins of the economy. But an interesting thing would happen, and you could see this all through the society, there were those native Liberians who were brought into Monrovia, and they would live with the American Liberians and sort of be adopted by them. You could look at the Cabinet and you would here and there find somebody whose roots were as a native Liberian and not as an Americo-Liberian.

We had to watch the situation, but we had to be very careful of the sensitivities of the Americo-Liberians about this very nomenclature. They didn't like it for obvious reasons.

Q: You might explain just what that means.

HORAN: Well, an Americo-Liberian means a person who traces his roots back to those freed American slaves who went to Liberia to found the country.

Q: This is in the 1820s.

HORAN: The 1840s. From '26 to '46. So those were the Americo-Liberians. But they began to say, “Look, if you keep talking about us being Americo-Liberians, you're just ignoring the fact that there's a lot of blood being exchanged between us and the “up-country boys,” as they use to say.

The problem for Tolbert — of course, I wasn't there when this happened — was that corruption just got too great. I remember one of his primary aides — as a matter of fact, he was like a chief of staff in the White House — who was one of the people who, after the coup d'#tat in which Tolbert was killed, was taken on the beach of Liberia and shot by the troops. I talked to his wife several years later, and she said, “I have my own personal mourning to do, and I'll deal with that.” Reggie Townsend was his name. She said, “But the problem with Tolbert was,” and here's the wife of the chief of staff, “they use to have a saying in Liberia — they've a marvelous sense of humor — that when Tubman went up in the tree to eat apples, he'd shake the branches so that some apples would fall to the

ground for others. But then when Tolbert went up in the tree to eat apples, he didn't shake the limbs."

Q: How did you deal, as an embassy, with the corruption problem? I'm talking maybe on two levels. One, just reporting on it, because it's always dangerous to report the problems of a friendly country because this sometimes gets played back to you. The other one was, how did you deal with it — aid, embassy operations, the whole bit?

HORAN: Well, the answer is that in those days — it's almost like Marcos, I guess, in a sense — it had not gotten that bad.

Q: Marcos. You're referring to the former Philippine leader.

HORAN: Philippine, yes. Where we finally realized that things had gotten so bad we'd better try to ease him out. Now, we didn't do that in Liberia. When I was there, I think it's fair to say that what we did was monitor the amount, and, of course, this is very difficult to do, because you get an awful lot of rumors. But you're absolutely right.

We also had this problem that we had to maintain good relations with this country because of the U.S. interests we thought were paramount. This is one of the problems of diplomacy, isn't it?

Q: Yes.

HORAN: We talk about this all the time inthe New York Times, the Washington Post, and elsewhere. When do you stop supporting a right-wing dictator in whose country you have some really important assets? That's a dilemma which will never be resolved. One just has to look at it on a case by case basis, I would guess. When was it time to start saying to Tolbert, "You've got to do something about corruption." I don't know. Maybe we should have.

Q: As DCM, there must have been times when you couldn't get something done without somebody asking for money, or something like that. Did this occur?

HORAN: No, not really. It's funny though, you talk about corruption and bribe taking and this sort of thing, but it's my sense that — and this may be terribly naive — other countries don't ask American officials for bribes, because we're not known for given bribes.

Q: Well, if you don't play the game, after awhile it's just more trouble than it's worth.

HORAN: My experience is that I never got asked for bribes.

Q: I found this too. As a consular officer over all the years, I had one very half- hearted offer of a bribe, this was in Yugoslavia. I just said, "We don't do that sort of thing." And that ended it.

HORAN: That's the way I feel about it. I think we're seen as a country which doesn't take bribes.

Q: How about those aid programs and all that? There must have been contractors who were siphoning off money.

HORAN: At this point in time, when I was there, the aid philosophy had shifted to almost exclusively rural agricultural, health projects with a large component of American technical assistance. You can rake off money when you're building roads and building buildings.

Q: But not for a well.

HORAN: But not for a well. I guess there are some you can do, but when you're trying to plant improved forms of rice or what have you, there's not a lot there you can rake off. So I don't recall that that was ever really a problem.

Q: The Jimmy Carter Administration came in with human rights as a major policy. Was this a problem for you at all? Were there human rights violations that you could see in Liberia?

HORAN: There had been earlier on with Tubman when he was accused by the United Nations of slavery, but in Tolbert's day, when I was there, we had our human rights report, but it was not a serious one. As a matter of fact, the country was really a very peaceful country. It wasn't until, I think, Tolbert made a huge mistake and did indeed execute some politicians.

Q: This was after you left?

HORAN: No, this was while I was there. No, it may have been after I left. Yes, it was after I left. But what he did was, there had been a scandal down in the southern part of Liberia, which was the old man Tubman's home area, and some politicians were accused of a bizarre murder of a local resident to obtain his private parts for spiritual reasons. Up until that point, in modern day Liberia there had been very, very few executions. Very few. And it was seen as a relatively peaceful country, even though it was run by a autocracy. There may obviously have been some abuses by the military, surely, but nothing of this grand scale. I can't remember the numbers of people who were, I think, hung.

I think that Tolbert flipped the society over by doing this, and changed the dynamics, and introduced into the country a sort of violence. And, of course, the upshot of all this was, and this is just one of the elements of the whole scenario, that he was overthrown in a coup d'#tat.

Q: When was this coup d'#tat?

HORAN: Let's see, it had to be 1980, because I was in Lilongwe when it happened, because I remember hearing it on the radio broadcast and recognizing the names of my

friends who had been shot on the beach. That was the first experience I'd had of having close friends taken on the beach and executed. Kind of hard to deal with.

Q: Did the Jimmy Carter Administration make any difference as far your relations with Liberia or not?

HORAN: Well, not really. The only crisis that happened was that Carter was going to make a trip to Africa. He started a grandiose trip to three continents and that was squelched. Then it was announced that he was going to go to Africa, but he was just going to visit only Nigeria. Well, the ambassador shot a cable back to the Department saying, “There's no way that President Carter can come to this continent and not visit Liberia.” The only President that has ever visited Liberia was Franklin Roosevelt, and he had lunch at the airport on his way to North Africa for one of the talks with Stalin and Churchill. So the ambassador got into a battle with the State Department over this.

Q: Really more over it with the White House, wasn't it?

HORAN: Of course, his conduit was the Assistant Secretary, so I guess the White House. As you know, the White House is always nervous about the use of the President's time. They've got to be very, very convinced that this is necessary.

So to make a long story short, after an exchange of telegrams, and also probably after some involvement by American business interests in Liberia, it was said, “We will come, and we will stop and have lunch at the Airport.”

The ambassador had to go back and say, “That won't work, because we've done that before. You've got to come to town and have lunch.” The airport's about 30 miles away from Monrovia. “You've got to come to town and have lunch with the President.”

Very, very reluctantly the White House agreed that yes, Carter would land, after his trip to Lagos, would land at Roberts Field, which is the airport, and get into his car with the

President of Liberia, and drive to the executive mansion have luncheon, then drive back and go home. So that was seen as a real feather in the cap for Liberia. Tolbert would have been devastated if Carter had come to Africa and not come to Liberia. So it was a two-state visit.

But once again, you have the role of the ambassador. I mean, he was convinced that it was — as you know, we get accused of localitis — to protect American interests, and also as to how the Americans were perceived as treating their allies. Because here's a guy who's seen, as you say, as a very close friend, maybe the water carrier, whatever, of the American interests in Africa. So the United States' President comes to Africa and ignores him. So what message does that give to people who we might be trying to influence in some other aspect? So he came, had a great motorcade down the street, and he went upstairs and had lunch, and went home. And that's all he had to do.

Q: But this is an important factor in foreign relations. Often it's the lack of doing something that causes the trouble.

HORAN: That's right. Exactly.

Q: Shall we leave Liberia at this point?

HORAN: Sure. That's fine.

Q: We're talking about 1978 and you became an ambassador to Malawi. How did this come about?

HORAN: I don't know. I just got a phone call saying, “You've been named to be ambassador to Malawi. Of course, I don't know how the process works, but I first started getting hints in Liberia that I was on a list for something. I didn't get that. Then a list for something, and I didn't get that. Actually, as a matter of fact, I was ready to retire. Bev

Carter said to me, “You'd be a fool to retire. You're going to be an ambassador in a little while if you just hold still.”

In those days — this was the beginning of the Carter Administration, wasn't it — in any case, in those days little places like Malawi were seen still as places where you sent career officers. So I guess I just became the State Department's candidate and off I went. I guess I was seen as having done a fairly good job in managing Monrovia. We got a great efficiency report from the inspectors. That probably didn't hurt, and being deputy to Bev Carter probably didn't hurt as well, because he was a man who had tremendous respect from his colleagues in the State Department, and elsewhere.

So all those things — as I say, I don't know what the process is really. I know what the official process is, but how does it sort of perk up through the system?

Q: Did you have any instructions before you went to Malawi, or did you go off there and keep the flag flying?

HORAN: I came back and did my orientation, we had very, very few issues with Malawi. The only serious issue we had with Malawi, and, once again, it was perking when I got there, was to reinstate the Peace Corps. The President, Kamuzu Banda, who's a very strict man, very conservative man, had kicked the Peace Corps out during the '60s because he didn't like hippies. He didn't like our dress, our long hair, our dress style, our lifestyle. He said, “I don't want my people to be exposed to this.” So he kicked the Peace Corps out, and this damaged our relations.

By the time I came on the scene, we were working through a system to reinstate the Peace Corps, whereby the Peace Corps would pay for a Malawian official to be present in the United States during the selection process. So he could certify to his government that, “Yes, these people are fine. I've talked to them, I know them, I've seen them.” I think I preceded the Peace Corps by maybe a couple of months, but, in any case, we sort of

came together. So getting the Peace Corps installed and in place was one of the issues that we had.

Q: Why did we care?

HORAN: Because we're that kind of a country. We don't like for somebody else to beat up on us, do we. The Peace Corps would say, “This isn't an appropriate activity on the part of a country with which we presumably have friendly relations.” So there was this bureaucratic drive, I suppose, in Washington to . . .

Q: Malawi represented a blank on the map.

HORAN: A blank on the map, I suppose. So the Peace Corps came in and, while I was there, functioned very well. I think it's probably still functioning very well.

Q: Could you describe Malawi a bit to me. I know very little about it.

HORAN: It's a small country of about 5 million people, it has no mineral resources whatsoever. It has Lake Malawi, which is one of the three largest lakes in the world, it has abundance of fishing, and it's an agricultural state. There may be some coal up north, it's not worth trying to get to it. There are no mineral resources in Malawi. Malawi is fortunate to have had Banda, who recognized this.

Q: I've heard Hastings quite a bit.

HORAN: Hastings is the name he used in London as a doctor, but then he changed it to Kamuzu at mid-course when he was head of state, and still is, of course, head of state in Malawi.

So it's a small country with very little tribal tension, very little tension with its neighbors, with the exception of a little tension with Tanzania. It's a country in which the President of the country decided, “I'm going to keep my people down on the farm growing crops.”

If you'll read the literature, you'll see that, with a couple of exceptions when there had been droughts, Malawi has been one of the few countries in Africa able to feed itself. It's a country which is a one party state and it's run by Kamuzu Banda. There's no important decision and very few decisions period that are made at the government level that are not made by Kamuzu Banda. He maintains, or he did, the portfolio of minister of foreign affairs, he maintained the portfolio of minister of agriculture. There may be one or two others. He was not the kind of leader who came in and kicked out all foreign ex-pats. When I was there, there were still expatriates who were still permanent under secretaries.

Q: They were from where?

HORAN: England. It was a British colony. They were still running the ministries of government. Banda said to his people, “I will give you the jobs as soon as you can do them.” But he just was not going to act in the style of some of the other leaders who said, “Okay. The ex-pats have got to go, and all these jobs are going to be given to native Malawians.”

There were two things that he did when he gained independence from the British. One is that he determined, as I say, to keep the people on the farm, and he was not going to allow the cities, and there weren't many cities anyway, to grow into these terrible urban areas with lots of urban slums. There was really only one city and that was the capitol, Bamako, which was in the south, south center. He wanted to open up the rest of the country, so he built one long road — Malawi's a narrow, long, little strip of land — from the south to the north, and he moved the capitol to the center of the country. He said, “If we leave the capitol in Bamako, then all the development will focus on Bamako. All the economic assistance from others, our own growth will be Bamako.” So he moved the capitol to Lilongwe.

He tried to get seed money from his Western friends to this, and they said, “Well, you don't need a new capitol. You're a poor little country, why do you need to start building

buildings in Lilongwe, this place out in the middle of nowhere?" So he went to South Africa and he got the money from the South Africans. Of course, as you know, he is the lone man out there. He's always had diplomatic relations with South Africa. He's not willing to rant and rave publicly about South Africa, or join that group of southern African states who are always railing against apartheid. He's opposed to it, but he says, "Look I've got to live with South Africa. Look at me. I'm right here. They're important to me and I've got to live with South Africa."Q: We have a map on the wall. Just for the record, Banda made, you say, the two decisions. We're talking about the 1980s, after rather extensive foreign aid programs, American and others. Two great failures have been seen as far as this foreign aid to Africa. One was that it tended to undercut native agriculture, and with that it concentrated so much of the population in the large cities, which were unable to feed themselves, and native agriculture was sort of disturbed. He seemed to have made the right decisions for a small country.

HORAN: It sounds like that. Some of the IMF reports that I have heard about, because, of course, I don't follow Malawi closely now since I'm out of the service anyway. I don't have access to all this information. He's always given high marks for that, although there may be some human rights abuses there. I understand that Malawi's literacy rate is not all that great.

One other thing he did in the same context of not expelling expatriates from ministries, he didn't expel the agriculturalists, the British who were growing tobacco, and growing cotton, and growing tea. As I say, it's a very rich country in agriculture.

When I was there, his neighbor, Zambia, which is right next door — here's country that went a different route — they decided to exploit their copper resources and buy food from somebody else. So when the copper prices fell out of sight, they had problems. The United Nations wanted to hurry and put a fast fix of maze into Zambia, and they heard that Malawi had a surplus of something like 15,000 tons of maze, which is not a lot of maze, but it was right there. It was sitting in their granaries, and ready for shipment to an area

like Zambia, which is just a short drive down the road, and fairly decent roads at that, by African standards (and by Washington D.C. standards).

So the United Nations authorities went to the Malawians and said, “We want to buy this 15,000 surplus tons of grain that you have.”

They said, “Well, you'll have to get the okay from the President.” As I told you, these kinds of decisions were made by the President.

The story goes — and I don't have this first hand — that when Banda heard that they wanted to buy the grain, he said, “Who needs the grain?”

They said, “Well, Kaunda needs the grain. He's got a drought up there.”

He said, “Well, give it to my friend Kaunda.”

So, I make the case that Malawi had one of the first African aid programs.

Q: How did you deal with Banda?

HORAN: Rarely. I rarely saw him. I dealt with him through his key advisors. He had two that I knew and worked with closely. One was the man who was in charge of the Civil Service. That's his title, he was director of the Civil Service. He was Banda's trouble-shooter. Banda had a permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, but he was not effective. The other was a man by the name Maluzi and he was the minister of government for the party, and he was also very influential with Banda. So those two men were the men I dealt with, not Banda himself. Banda didn't see foreign dignitaries. I quickly realized that there was no reason for me to try to change that attitude, that I could deal just as well — we didn't have that many problems anyway — through these people as with Banda.

The only thing I wanted to see was, and it's all we needed in the two years that I was there, to have a high-level U.S. Government visit to Malawi, because it had been a long time since there had been one. I don't even remember when there was one.

So I went after Dick Moose, who was Assistant Secretary of State, and said, “You really need to come to Malawi. You're going to Rhodesia all the time, you're going to southern Africa all the time, you need to come to Malawi. That's all we need, just a visit, just to go pay a call on the President. That's all we need.”

He finally took me up on that, and got even with me because he decided to have a small conference of all the U.S. ambassadors in southern Africa in Lilongwe in my residence, my office building. So I had my colleagues from around southern Africa and Dick Moose. Dick and I paid a call on the President, and that was it.

Q: Coming back, you were there during the Carter Administration and human rights were important. Malawi was labeled not free. There are various gradations of outfits in Malawi because it's one party system and considered not free, and there had been the expulsion, hadn't there, of many of the Asians at that point?

HORAN: No. It was the mistreatment of the Seventh Day Adventists.

Q: Did you have to deal with these problems?

HORAN: In the first place, Banda has a poor reputation in this country among the liberals, because of his relationships with the South Africans, because of his refusal to speak out publicly on the issues that southern Africans care about and that Americans care about. That is to say, independence for Namibia, and particularly apartheid in South Africa, his strict rules about society, women couldn't wear slacks or men couldn't have their hair long, there was censorship of books. This has eased up considerably since I was there. For example, the Green Revolution wasn't allowed into the country — you know, this is one of the standard books about improving agricultural growth — because of the word

“revolution.” This was just a knee-jerk reaction, probably from some little censor who was there, and, of course, he'd be censoring films and this sort of thing. So there was this kind of atmosphere that didn't sit well in this country.

The only real serious problem I had with Malawi was that one day we woke up to find out that one of our most loyal local employees at the USIS Cultural Center had been arrested and incarcerated with no charges. Well, the hostages were in Iran, Washington was nervous about this sort of thing. We had no jurisdiction over him, he was a Malawian. But USIA just raised hell, “What's Horan doing about getting this guy out of jail?”

Well, what I did was — first of all, little by little, because he was given access to his family, we were able to piece together the story that he'd been picked up because somebody had found a book of his, which was a diary, in which he had derogatory things to say about the President, which you just didn't do. I don't suppose you do it today.

My task was to get him free. Now, if I had gone to Banda, he would have said to me, “Look, it's none of your business, ambassador. He's a Malawian. I'll work this thing out as I see fit. We'll let the process go through.” I would have, in my judgment, put a stiff board in his back. So what did I do? I went to Johnny N'Guiri, this person I was telling you about who was in charge of the Civil Service, I said, “John, you've got to help me. I've got a serious problem. We've got to get this fellow out of jail as soon as we can. It's really creating problems back in the States.”

He said, “Don't talk to me about this. Go see the Under Secretary for Foreign affairs.”

I said, “John, you know you're the one I've got to talk to.”

Afterward, I left him alone. I let him work out the problem and then, little by little, this thing straightened itself out, and, lo and behold, one day out of the clear blue sky the USIS employee — whose name escapes me — was released and came back to work. He wasn't abused, apparently, in jail. He was fed, this sort of thing.

That was the only real human rights problem, because by the time I got there the Seventh Day Adventists problem had been resolved.

Q: How effective was the Peace Corps while you there?

HORAN: It was small. It was small on purpose, very low key. We had a Peace Corps director who was himself very low key. It's hard for me to assess how effective they were, because what we really were concerned with was that they be, in their personal conduct, holier than the holy, so that we wouldn't raise up this problem — they were being watched obviously — of Banda's suspicion of the attitudes of young Americans.

Q: They were all aware of the problem?

HORAN: They were all aware of the problem. Ernie Yancey spent a lot of time — he was the Peace Corps director — within country. He would hold twice-yearly meetings with the volunteers in a local spot where they would all come together. I can't remember, I think their numbers must have been 20 or so, so you can't have a lot of impact. Many of them were teachers, there were some in health care as well, some in agriculture. I just don't remember that. But that was the main thrust, was to get the think going, not to go too fast.

One thing we had in our favor was that the deputy Peace Corps director had been in Malawi himself as a Peace Corps volunteer earlier and he had married a Malawian, and she had contacts within the government so it was a nice good tie there. He had good contacts himself in the society, so he could use those contacts to see if something was going wrong.

Q: How was your staff in Malawi? It was small, obviously.

HORAN: I had a DCM and economic officer. The DCM was a political officer. I had an administrative officer. The economic officer was also the Consular officer. But we had a military attach#.

Q: [Laughter] What did the military attach# do?

HORAN: Well, that's interesting. What the military attach# did was to be in the area. No neighboring countries wanted a military attach#. Zambia didn't want a military attach#, obviously Mozambique wasn't interested in a military attach#, South Africa had it's own attach#, Tanzania wasn't interested in military attach#, Banda didn't care, so that was fine with him. As a matter of fact, when I was named ambassador, I was wooed by the Defense Department because there had been some questions to whether we really needed a Defense attach# and Defense wanted to have a presence in that area of the world. I said, “Well, it's not going to give me any problem. As long as the attach# can get along with me, it's fine with me.” As a matter of fact, he was finally allowed to make a couple trips to Zambia just to talk to his counterparts in Zambia. So our relations with Malawi at that level were good as long as he was not perceived as meddling in the affairs of Malawi, which he was not.

Q: Did you find yourself there with, you might say, interesting neighbors in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia? Were you sort of a listening post or not?

HORAN: Only in Mozambique. We had a consulate down in Bamako whose job was to look, to the extent they could, at Mozambique. But as far as Zambia and Tanzania, no. We had ambassadors there who were perfectly qualified to take care of their own. One thing, you know, an ambassador doesn't like is to get advise from another ambassador. [Laughter] There have been some famous cases. I hope you have some of them on your tapes.

It's funny, you know, going to Malawi was initially very frustrating because there really wasn't that much to do. I finally realized that the reason I was there, as I mentioned earlier to you, was that I was a presence. Banda used the diplomatic corps as evidence of nationhood, and he did lots of public events, lots of public speaking, opening sugar mills, watching his women dance, arriving at the airports, going out inspecting the crops. You

were always on the road following Banda around. When I realized that that's what I was there for was to follow Banda around, and, obviously, deal with embassy's problems as well — and I had a good strong DCM — I got comfortable with myself.

Q: You sort of relaxed. I found as Consul General of Naples I went to a great many masses, and to meetings and all just to be there. Why don't we move then to your last assignment. Is there anything else we should cover?

HORAN: No, I don't think so. That's fine.

Q: You were Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

HORAN: Yes. I was only there for a year. I got there, I think, in July of 1980, stayed with the last of the Carter Administration, and then, of course, Chet Crocker came in, and I worked with him through the first months of his efforts to devise a strategy particularly for southern Africa. Then in August of '81 I retired.

Q: First let's doing a little comparing, contrast. Richard Moose as Assistant Secretary for African Affairs — what was his interests and how did he operate?

HORAN: He'll kill me.

Q: [Laughter] Go ahead.

HORAN: Dick Moose was an activist. He was a man of tremendous energy and imagination, and in-fighter. He was in there fighting within the system, but fighting. Making sure that he knew what other people's motivation were, making sure, if he had any, what his enemies were up to. Making sure that his deputies, for example, were really managing the problems that he saw in Africa, and making sure that the deputies were making sure that the people below the deputy were operating skillfully and with vigor, and with ambition and drive, and imagination to get the job done, to control the situation.

A marvelous story about Dick. When we had the coup d'#tat in Liberia and he was working that problem, he found a young Peace Corps officer who had taught Sgt. Doe (the coup leader) in either grade school or high school, maybe even just grade school. This ex-volunteer gave Richard Moose at Richard Moose's request — this gives you an idea how this guy, Dick Moose, operates — insights into the speech patterns and the speech thoughts of a Liberian of the type of Sgt. Doe, because they think differently from us. They think in parables. For example, the one I told you about shaking the tree and the apples following to the ground.

So Dick Moose prepared himself for going out to deal with Sgt. Doe, among other things, by having these conversations with this volunteer, who could tell him about who you're going to see, what this man is going to look like in terms of in his own mind.

Chet Crocker was a different human being, of course. He'd been in government, he had been here at Georgetown at the Center for Strategic International Studies heading the African program, very quiet, very, very thoughtful, highly analytical, tough-minded scholar/diplomat. Lots of guts. You know, he had real problems getting confirmed. Maybe you don't remember this, but he did. And he had a real tough time initially, but he knew what he wanted, he developed a policy — this is now history — he thought would work in southern Africa. He was willing to put up with the criticism that was severe, and loud and frequent, and go ahead, as the good diplomats have to do, plod through the process. Obviously, Chet Crocker has done that.

Q: We're talking particularly about our policy towards southern Africa.

HORAN: Southern Africa. The process of achieving independence for Namibia, which is suppose to start on Saturday, the process, and getting the Cubans out of Angola. I had tremendous respect for him.

Q: There was this expression, "There was blood in corridors" in the ARA of the Latin America bureau when the Reagan Administration came in. It was very much a hostile takeover there. How about with Africa?

HORAN: No, because the Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary, Lannon Walker had worked with Moose as his senior deputy and he was kept on by . . . As a matter of fact, there was some resistance on the Hill to Walker, because of his association with Moose. And Crocker said, "No, this is the man I want, because this man can do for me what I want him to do. He knows the system, and he can help me work the system."

Q: But it does contrast. It depends very much on personality, because on the Latin American side, there was this feeling of hostility, particularly dealing with Central America.

HORAN: Not in . . . no, it wasn't so in . . .

Q: In the Middle East, I think, it also came off very nicely.

HORAN: Crocker and Moose's styles are different. Let me give you an insight to this. I went out to, I think, Zambia after I had retired at the request of the State Department to talk about constructive engagement. We were at dinner at the ambassador's residence, and Dick Moose was in town as a businessman, and so he came to the dinner. I, of course, was the person who was supposed to give these Zambian officials who had been invited for the purpose of, you know, the table talk, conversation. So I gave the defense of constructive engagement, and they turned to Moose and said, "What are your views?"

He said, "No. No, I had my shot. I'll stay out of this." I really admired him for that, and I appreciated that fact that he said, "No. Horan's got a job to do as it is, and I'm going to get myself involved. I had my shot."

Q: Could you explain again to the record, because these terms may lose their meaning later on, what constructive engagement meant?

HORAN: Constructive engagement was the Crocker policy as to how to deal with southern Africa, and had basically five points to it. One was economic growth in the area. Two, encouraging the states of the area to find ways in which they could live together peacefully and securely. Three, to abandon the confrontational policy vis-a-vis South Africa, which was the Moose policy, and try to work with all South Africans to see how we could best influence South Africa to change it's internal system. The fourth was independence for Namibia, which is the last colonial area in Africa. And, fifth, to resolve the question, which for us was not acceptable, of the presence of many thousands of Cuban troops in Angola, and try to get them out of Angola, and to get Angola to reconcile it's various components, national reconciliation. So those were the five.

For critics constructive engagement was short-hand for a policy to get along with the South African government, to show South Africa that we were their friends. I don't accept that. As we see today, we've got one of the great successes of the Reagan Administration; this accord that was signed in December 22nd, with the Soviets sitting there helping us all the way to get the Angolans to agree to a timetable for removing the Cubans, and the South Africans to agree for a timetable to giving independence to Namibia. The timetable for the independence of Namibia is going to be guaranteed by the five permanent members of the security counsel, the Soviets, the Chinese, us, the British and the French.

Q: It's amazing. Looking at this, is there anything else you'd like to say about your time? There are two questions we try to ask on these interviews. When looking back, what did you do that gave you the greatest satisfaction in your Foreign Service career?

HORAN: Oh, that's awfully hard to say. Well, I suppose one of the greatest satisfactions was working through the flood of Florence. You really could make a difference in terms of the initial stages of trying to figure out what had to be done, and do it. The second is the small assistance we could give to helping Florentines to reconstruct their city. Q: There's nothing like a disaster to, I think, bring out the best of us.

HORAN: That's right, exactly. The other thing, I think, is my three years at National Security Counsel, because it was such a small staff. In a few instances you could make a difference. When your colleague in the State Department, the Assistant Secretary of State, was tearing his hair because he couldn't get something done that he thought ought to be done, and you could try to get it done for him.

Q: You did have the feeling that you were closer to the levers of real power there.

HORAN: Well, you have to, because you are. The proximity is there. Senator Moynihan tells this marvelous story about the fact that General Marshall, who was Secretary of State, made an enormous mistake when he moved from the old executive office building to Foggy Bottom, because he left a vacuum to be filled. He said, “What he should have done was to stay himself with his small staff in the old EOB, and move the rest of the people to Foggy Bottom.” Well, when he left and went to Foggy Bottom, somebody came in and filled it. So a busy man like the President of the United States is going to call the guy who's at the elbow, isn't he?

Q: Yes.

HORAN: I hope it changes, and I think maybe under Baker it will, but who sees the President of the United States every morning? I guess the National Security Advisor still does. Although, as I say, I think that in Brent Scowcroft we have a real pro, who doesn't have a big ego that has to be satisfied. And, of course, in Secretary Baker we have probably the President's closest advisor, so he's going to have access to the President, maybe in the past decade or two some Secretaries of State did not have had.

Q: The final question on this, I'm sure this happens because of your connection with the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, if a young student comes to you says, “What about the Foreign Service as a career?” how do you respond to that?

HORAN: I caution them that I'm really biased, because I had a great time in the Foreign Service. I tell them that I recognize that the system has changed and they ought to look very, very closely at the system. Is it a career which you can go into and expect to stay, have an honorable career that you don't find yourself out of at the age of 45, or whatever it is, with two kids in college, and you've got to go look for another job? But also, I tell them to prepare for an alternate profession. That's pretty standard. Don't go for the Foreign Service as the end all and be all. Get yourself an education which will allow you to have an alternate career.

What I see looking around this campus, is that, obviously unlike me and maybe you, if you want a career in international affairs these days, the possibilities are much larger than when you and I were looking at careers in international affairs. So these students have lots of options.

Q: You're talking about banking and business.

HORAN: Banking, business and this sort of thing, sure. So they're looking at these options, and however the debate is, or are we getting the right kind of people in the State Department, well, I don't know. But we still have the same numbers who take the exam every year. Fifteen-thousand take the written exam and, what, 200 get into the Foreign Service?

Q: Yes.

HORAN: Hope a little cream is skimmed off the top. [Laughter]

Q: Hal, I thank you very much. I really appreciate this.

End of interview